

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE  
CONFIDENTIAL  
INFORMATION REPORT

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SUPPLEMENT TO  
REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

1. When, after protracted negotiations, the Sudan Railroad strike went finally into effect on 16 March, all railroad yards, stations, workshops, and docks all over the country became suddenly deserted. The effectiveness of the strike took the government by surprise, revealing a high degree of organization. The government admitted that the strike was 90% effective. In view of the strike notification, many trains had already been cancelled but even those that were scheduled to run had to remain idle. Except for a few British officials, the main section at Khartoum was deserted.

2. Atbara, the administrative center of the Sudan Railways, was particularly hard hit. The mechanical and engineering divisions there came to a complete standstill. Parts of the town remained in darkness as a result of the refusal of railroad workers to operate the power station. Sanitary workers at Atbara staged a sympathy strike and resumed work only after the striking Railroad Workers' Affairs Association appealed to them. Taxi drivers at Atbara, Damar, and Barber came out on strike and all transport ceased between these towns.

3. There was immediately an outbreak of sympathy strikes. All the drivers in the three towns of Khartoum, Khartoum North, and Omdurman struck on 16 March. There were sporadic stoppages of work at the Sudan Irrigation Department, the water control section of Northern Gezira Sudan Plantation Syndicate. Many private establishments, including al-Salaam Printing Company, publishers of Sart al-Sudan newspaper, closed down. Shipping activities at Port Sudan were affected. Parts of the town remained in darkness. Thousands of tons of produce and fertilizer from the United Kingdom piled up on the dockyards. 25,000 tons of cotton seed waited for shipment and some ships left without completing their unloading. Nile boat service stopped between Shellal and Wadi Halfa, and elsewhere. The southbound post boat, RAJAF, stopped at Bank for four days (March 15-18), then proceeded to Malakal where it stopped for the remainder of the strike.

4. Although plans for operating a curtailed rail service in the event of a strike were complete, the wide extent of the strike had not been anticipated by the government. Even attempts to maintain a skeleton service met with failure at first. On 15 March R.H. Robertson, General Manager of Sudan Railways, appealed for volunteers of all nationalities to assist the Administration in maintaining essential services. Volunteers were invited for service at Atbara, Khartoum, Port Sudan, Wadi Halfa, Wadi Medani and

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Kassala Kosto for work as guards, motor trolley drivers, signalmen, shunters, engine drivers, firemen, and fitters. Training would take place at Atbara or Khartoum.

5. Many Englishmen offered their services and casual native laborers trickled in. As inducement it was promised that there might be permanent employment opportunities for volunteer workers, free meal allowances were given, retired railroad personnel were promised six months work if they wished it, and all employees whose departments were striking were offered double pay. Rates of pay for native workers ranged from Pt. 15 - Pt. 50 per day in the traffic department, and from Pt. 15 - Pt. 75 in the mechanical division, under the strike conditions. Rates of pay for marine staff at Port Sudan were Pt. 25 - Pt. 75 for work as tugmaster, tug engineer, launch driver crews and dockyard staff. Thereupon, more and more Sudanese volunteers applied for work.
6. To combat the strikers the railroad management sent notices to many employees stating that they would be subject to dismissal by the board of discipline if they persisted in striking, and that they would be fined two days' pay for each day's unemployment. All striking railroad workmen living in railroad administration employees' boarding houses were ordered to evacuate them.
7. English full-time and part-time volunteers found the experience profitable. A number of army and RAF personnel volunteered for work at Khartoum. Many of the more important British officials volunteered for part-time work. Among these were the District Commissioner of Khartoum North, Andrew Blaikie; and the Deputy Governor of Khartoum, J.D. Longe. These officials stated that they were getting an extra day's pay from the railroad for a few hours' work each morning preparing engines. Also they received an extra ration of whiskey. For these reasons many English volunteers regretted the end of the strike on 17 April. By that time nearly half the normal service was operating under the supervision of English volunteers.
8. Volunteers at Atbara soon started to operate the ice plant, the power station, the waterworks, and the fire brigade. At the height of the cotton export season, in two weeks volunteers had moved thousands of tons of lint cotton and cotton seed out of Gezira cotton plantation fields on the White Nile. The total moved was half the amount normally moved. Contract labor was more and more successfully employed at Port Sudan in clearing vessels in port, but there were attempts at sabotage and many disturbances occurred. River service was restricted throughout the strike, but on the Dongola Reach the post boat JACKSON sailed from Kareima on 2 April, arriving at Dongola two days late. Some motor cars managed to reach Dongola direct from Omdurman.
9. The first volunteer-manned train with armed guards left Khartoum on 18 March for Wadi Medani. The train was driven by Mathers, an English locomotive inspector. His assistants were a few other Englishmen and Sudanese traffic trainees from Gordon College. Trains conveying rations and water to stations between Atbara and Port Sudan also started to operate weekly from this date. On 10 April twenty main line engines were in operation between Atbara, Khartoum, Port Sudan, Gorashi and Wadi Medani, subject to delays. Delays were caused mainly by sand covering the rails, making inspection of couplings and axle boxes difficult, and by sabotage.

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10. Local support for the strikers took the form of telegrams sent to the government from many departments, trade unions and local sheikhs expressing sympathy for the workers and requesting that their demands be met. The majority of the Arabic press took a partisan attitude; some appealed to the Governor General that the strikers' demands be met, and others took a threatening attitude stating that sympathy was not enough and that it was unwise of the government to sow seeds of hatred in the face of the glaring injustices committed against the Sudanese worker.
11. Donations for the Workers' Affairs Association were made by landlords in the form of remittances of rent to the Association for its premises, and to striking workmen. Farmers distributed large amounts of vegetables and fruits to strikers, others contributed furniture, watches and jewelry, and women began canvassing for donations. There were individual donations of up to three hundred pounds.

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